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Letter dated 6 April 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Uganda to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the response of the Government of Uganda to the statement made by the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, Samantha Power, at the 7653rd meeting of the Security Council, on 21 March 2016 (see annex).

At that meeting, the Security Council held an open debate on the prevention and resolution of conflicts in the Great Lakes region, in connection with the item entitled "Maintenance of international peace and security".

During the debate, Ms. Power acknowledged Uganda's positive contribution to international peace and security in the region; and her generous hosting of, and provision of social services to, more than 500,000 refugees. She went on, however, to criticize Uganda's democratic process, in particular the recently held general elections.

I should be grateful if the present latter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Richard **Nduhuura**
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 6 April 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Uganda to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Response issued on 30 March 2016 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uganda to the statement made by the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations at the open debate on the prevention and resolution of conflicts in the Great Lakes region, held by the Security Council on 21 March 2016, in connection with the item entitled "Maintenance of international peace and security".

At its 7653rd meeting, on 21 March 2016, the Security Council held an open debate on the **prevention and resolution of conflicts in the Great Lakes region, in connection with the item entitled "Maintenance of international peace and security"**. During the debate, the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, Samantha Power, among other issues, acknowledged the positive contribution made by Uganda to international peace and security in the region and her generous hosting of, and provision of social services to, more than 500,000 refugees. She was critical, however, of Uganda's democratic process, in particular last month's general elections, during which, she charged, the Government and its security forces had detained opposition figures without legal justification, harassed their supporters and intimidated the media. She also alleged that the Government had passed legislation restricting the operations of non-governmental organizations and that the actions of the President of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni, contravene the rule of law, jeopardize Uganda's democratic progress and threaten Uganda's future stability and prosperity.

In his media statement of 20 February, the Prime Minister of Uganda, Ruhakana Rugunda, addressed these same issues. In the lead-up to and immediately following the elections, inflammatory statements were made by one of the opposition leaders, Dr. Kizza Besigye, including a threat to make the country "ungovernable" through a defiance campaign. In addition, he declared his intention not to use any available legal means to seek redress for perceived grievances. The Government had credible information that he had every intention of carrying out this threat, including plans to mobilize a "one-million-man March" to the Electoral Commission, located in the middle of Kampala city, purportedly to collect his election results. This, despite the fact that he had opted not to pick them up on the appointed date. A march of this nature would have caused mayhem in the city centre and disrupted normal business. The Government has a responsibility to protect its citizens and their property and immediately imposed restrictions on those who wished to cause disruption and a breach of public order.

The Ugandan media environment is extremely free and pluralistic and the media are driven mainly by the private sector. There are over 24 daily and weekly newspapers, and 26 free-to-air and five pay-TV stations, as well as 220 licensed, operational radio stations countrywide. The Government does not exercise editorial or content supervision or censorship, nor did it do so at any time during the recently concluded elections. The law in Uganda mandates only the Electoral Commission to conduct and declare the results of elections. Restrictions on social media from 18 to 20 February 2016 were imposed in response to reliable information available to the Government indicating that some individuals were planning to cause disruption, mayhem and violence using social media platforms. For example, the opposition was

planning to declare, through social media, its own doctored, unofficial results, which is contrary to the law. Lessons learned from the significant role played by hate media in the genocide in Rwanda remain fresh. These restrictions in the public interest cannot be interpreted as representing an intimidation of the press.

Regarding the issue of the NGO Act, it should be made clear that its main purpose was to align the activities of non-governmental organizations with national priorities and government development plans as well as to hold those organizations to the same standard of accountability that they advocate for other actors.

Contrary to the views expressed by Ms. Power, the preventive measures put in place by the Government of Uganda are aimed at protecting Uganda's young democracy and promoting stability and prosperity in Uganda and the region as a whole. These measures arise from the need for balance in all democratic dispensations: We all have rights as well as responsibilities, especially with regard to acting within the rule of law even as we claim our individual rights.